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ABSTRACT

A study examined older adult participation in continuing education to determine if there are significant differences in the characteristics and participation motivations between older adults who enroll in age-integrated programs and those who participate in age-segregated programs. Questionnaires consisting of a program participant's survey collecting social and demographic information and Boshier's Education Participation Scale (a survey instrument consisting of thirty-five statements of reasons for participation in adult education programs) were completed by 482 older adults enrolled in non-credit classes at one university and three community learning centers. Respondents were divided into four groups, depending on whether they participated in age-segregated or age-integrated programs and or whether they took academic or recreation and hobby courses. Study results indicated that age-segregated, community-based educational programs attract learners with a variety of social and demographic characteristics. Older adult learners attend community classes for reasons of cost and convenience and because of the less formal atmosphere of the classes. Social contact is a prime motivational factor. While age-segregated learners would generally prefer age-integrated programs, they accept age-segregation as the price one has to pay for community-based or targeted programs. (MN)

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PARTICIPATION MOTIVATIONS OF OLDER ADULT LEARNERS

Presented at the Annual Meeting
of the
Association for Gerontology in Higher Education
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The field of older adult education -- its concepts, issues, and problems -- has been expanding rapidly since the early 1970's. As the number of older adults participating in continuing education increases, so does the research on these participants and so do the programming efforts on behalf of the elderly.

The typical research study on education of older adults is descriptive, and examines either the characteristics of the participants, or the nature and perceived value of the program. These descriptive studies, and the theoretical contributions of others, have done much to develop and shape the field of older adult education. However, there are still several gaps in the knowledge base on education for the elderly. One of these gaps is in the area of motivation. Roger Boshier (1971, 1977) is one of the few researchers who has taken the concept of psychological motivation and applied it to the issue of participation in adult education, and then to the education of older adults (Boshier and Riddell, 1978). However, additional research is needed on what motivates older adults to participate in different types of education programs and environments.

A second information gap can be met by comparative studies which indicate where and why older adults are learning. There are many types of programs available, but it is not clear what characteristics of the elderly influence their choices and the ways in which learning takes place.

This study focuses on older adult participation in continuing education, and addresses the question of "who" is participating, and the question of "where" by comparing older adults enrolled in age-segregated educational programs with those in age-integrated programs. The question of "why" is addressed by analyzing and comparing the motivational orientations of older adults who participate in each of these two educational environments. The answers to these questions will assist in the identification of the types of older adults who participate in both age-segregated and age-integrated continuing education.

Older Adult Education

While education for the young is primarily viewed as economic (preparing for a career), education for older adults can have many purposes. One of these is to impart skills or training, perhaps in preparation for a second career. A second purpose is recreation -- classes that teach such things as sports or crafts. A third purpose relates to preparing older adults for retirement, or acquainting them with the processes of aging. Finally, there is liberal or academic education, where the education is offered and taken for the sake of learning.

Yet the value of education to older adults does not have to be tangible, or even practical. Education is more a process than a product -- a process for personal growth and fulfillment, self-development, and self-determination. It need not occur in a building, in a room with desks and four walls, or even with a teacher. Older adults have learned and are learning through living, and this learning is integrated with other aspects of their lives -- the intellectual, social, and physical experiences which are meaningful to the person and to society (Kauffman, 1971). In this sense, education is truly lifelong, and life-integrated. This in part explains why some older adults view organized adult education programs as separate from the mainstream of their lives and why enrollment levels are so low.

However, adult education programs are attracting anywhere from four percent to 30 percent of adults aged 55 and over, depending on the nature of the program (Sadowski and Schill, 1979; Tough, 1971). These older adults are similar to other adult education participants in that they are likely to be married women who are well-educated, middle-class, and financially comfortable (Houle, 1961; Johnstone and Rivera, 1965). The older learners are also likely to be active in community affairs, previous participants in adult education, in good health, and have families

and friends who consider education to be important or desirable (March, Hooper, and Baum, 1977; Robinson, 1972). They are, like other learners, people with an intellectual curiosity and a thirst for knowledge that does not stop in old age.

Older adults pursuing continuing education in organized formats generally participate at community organizations (42%) or schools or colleges (26%) (Academy for Educational Development, 1974). The programs offered by these institutions are often categorized as formal or informal classes, a classification which is usually influenced by the subject matter. Another typology used to describe these settings and their programs is age-segregated or age-integrated. These two types have very different psychological, social, and often physical characteristics, yet little is known about why older adult learners choose one over the other.

Age-segregated environments separate older learners from younger ones, both physically and psychologically. This is rarely the result of a philosophy that states that older learners are not as good as younger ones or that they learn differently, but rather as an attempt to meet their learning needs within their own peer groups. The philosophical base of this model is one that suggests that older adults are most comfortable in a learning environment where learners belong to the same age cohort, and where they are not competing with younger learners, either academically or for classroom space. The model also implies that the knowledge and information of a course has more relevance when it is presented to a group of learners who have lived through the same periods of time and may have similar backgrounds and experiences. The social aspects of learning play an important part in this model, since the gathering of peers for the learning experience provides an opportunity for socializing.

While age-segregated education has many supporters (Peterson, 1974; Hixson, 1969; Altman and Oppenheimer, 1975), one of its drawbacks is that when older adults are singled out as having special needs, it may reflect a tendency to define aging as a social problem. Perhaps because of the negative connotations of this segregation, many older adults do not affiliate with their peers in organizations or programs exclusively for the aged (Graney and Hays, 1976; Hansson et al., 1978).

Age-integrated education may meet the needs of other older adult learners, those who enjoy learning with people of all ages. In age-integrated classes, not only are the age groups physically mixed, but there is a psychological mix: an interaction between older and younger learners which leads to shared experiences, exchange of knowledge and philosophies, and improved understanding of attitudes.

Age-integrated education is often used by programmers and educators to mainstream older adults because it is assumed that the elderly are "disengaged". But to older adults, the appeal of age-integrated programs seems to be in the opportunities and challenges of interaction with younger people, to avoid being seen as age-stereotyped, to appear and feel young themselves, and to share their knowledge and experience with young people (Covey, 1980; Wood, 1976).

In spite of the growing interest among older adults in continuing education and the growing number of programs designed to meet these interests, there are still many barriers which confront older learners. Those listed in Figure 1 include barriers which are posed by the individual, such as lack of time; barriers which arise out of the course content, such as lack of relevance; and barriers which originate with the social environment, such as inadequate transportation. The barriers to educational participation are all too easy to identify, but there are ways that programmers can compensate for or eliminate some of the barriers. These include non-competitive programs, supportive services adapting instructional

techniques, and changing the educational format to include such things as low-cost, daytime classes.

Participation Motivations

Motivation is a concept used to explain why organisms do what they do, and to designate the kind of relationships that an organism has with its environment. There are many ways to describe and classify motives, but it is very difficult to measure human motivation since it interacts with so many other psychological, social, physical, and environmental variables. It is also difficult to identify the outcomes of being motivated, since such things as behavior, learning, and participation can have other origins.

Very little is known about what factors influence participation of older people in educational programs. Researchers who have attempted to identify these factors usually start by identifying reasons for participation, and many stop there (Charles, 1976; Kauffman, 1966). However, factors influencing participation can be much more significant than simple reasons since a factor indicates a deeper need which moves adults to identify and pursue learning activities than does a single surface reason (Burgess, 1971). The explanations of motivation can best be found not in studies which deduce motivations from reasons, but rather in studies which develop motivational models of educational participation, and delve into the psychological origins of motivation.

One of these motivational models of educational participation is the learning orientation model developed by Cyril Houle. His 1961 book, The Inquiring Mind, was the first major work which looked at the participants in adult education instead of the act of participation. Houle studied 22 continuing learners and classified their approaches to learning as Goal-oriented, Activity-oriented and Learning-oriented. Although research by others over the years has altered and expanded these

classifications, Houle's typology established a foundation for exploring the motivations of adult learners.

In 1971, Roger Boshier published the first of his research papers which combined Houle's learning orientation approach with the areas of motivation and participation. He developed the descriptive concept of "motivational orientation" which is used to specify the multivariate motivations which influence adult education participation. Boshier believes that motivational orientations are more than just superficial clusters of reasons for enrollment. They are derived from needs and interests, and seem to be surface manifestations of psychological states, which are in turn probably related to psycho-social conditions in various age and socio-economic groups (Boshier, 1977:112). Boshier's attempts to identify the social and psychological underpinnings of reasons for participation led him to develop a theoretical model of motivation which relates reasons for participation to psychological stages of growth and deficiency. In other words, Boshier uses the concept of motivational orientation to reflect the psychological states of the participants, and labels these motivational orientations as reflecting either growth drives (Life-space motives) or deficiency drives (Life-chance motives). Life-space motives relate to growing and expressing oneself, and Life-chance motives relate to the need to survive and acquire utilitarian knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

Boshier's research on the motivational orientations of older adults toward educational participation has produced four factors, generated from items on his Educational Participation Scale as shown in Figure 2. He then labelled each of these factors as being characteristic of Life-chance (Escape/Stimulation) or Life-space (Social Welfare and Cognitive Interest). The psychological foundation of the Social Contact factor was not as clear, although the meaning certainly is. This factor labelling develops motivational orientation research to a point where a psychological

base or foundation can be attributed to reasons for participation. The practical application of Boshier's research is that it enables programmers to more accurately determine why different groups of people are attending their programs, to make future programs more relevant to the learners' needs, and to market their programs more effectively.

Method

This research uses Boshier's motivational orientation model to compare older adult learners in two educational environments. The purpose of the study is to determine if there are significant differences in the characteristics and participation motivations between older adults who enroll in age-integrated educational programs and those who participate in age-segregated programs. One population is the Guest Students on the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus, who are adults aged 62 and over auditing classes free of charge. The other population is groups of older adults who are enrolled in non-credit classes in three community learning centers in Dane County, Wisconsin. The samples drawn for the research were those enrolled in these programs between June, 1979 and June, 1980:

Group	Sample	Response Rate
Belleville Learning Center	137	76%
Madison Learning Center	159	75%
N. W. Dane Learning Center	170	82%
Guest Students	158	86%

Questionnaires were mailed to these 624 older adults which consisted of a Program Participants Survey to collect social and demographic information, and Boshier's Education Participation Scale, which consists of 35 statements of reasons for participation in adult education programs (Boshier and Riddell, 1978). The returned questionnaires (482) were sorted to eliminate respondents under the age of 62 and to match the respondents by the type of class and environment in which they participated. These four groups of respondents are used in the data analysis:

Age-Integrated Learners in Academic Courses
Age-Integrated Learners in Hobby and Recreation Courses
Age-Segregated Learners in Academic Courses
Age-Segregated Learners in Hobby and Recreation Courses

The research process used in this study was to first look at the social and demographic characteristics of the respondents, and test for significant differences. Second, a factor analysis was performed to determine if the results conformed to Boshier's four factors of Escape/Stimulation, Social Welfare, Social Contact, and Cognitive Interest. And finally, comparisons were made between the age-integrated learners and the age-segregated learners to determine the "influencing" strength of the motivational orientation.

Results

The participants in the community learning centers and the Guest Student program on the university campus were voluntary learners who were all residents of the same county. They had the same educational opportunities available to them, although these opportunities included such variables as cost, time of day, distance from home, and instructor. It is, of course, impossible to identify all the factors, reasons, and circumstances which lead an adult learner to enroll in one program as opposed to another. Yet there is valuable information that can be gained by comparing the characteristics of older adult learners in different educational programs. In this case, the comparison is between adults aged 62 and over in age-segregated and age-integrated environments.

Figure 3 shows the results of the tests for differences among the three groups of age-segregated learners, and between the age-segregated learners as a whole and the age-integrated learners. Although the chart lists the test results on a number of variables, four have been singled out as being strongly related to educational participation. These variables are age, educational level, organizational affiliations (number of clubs) educational participation pattern (number of classes).

Age. The age-segregated learners can be almost equally divided between those who are aged 62 to 70 and those who are between age 71 and age 79. The most urban learning center attracted slightly younger learners (62-70), and the most rural learning center had a slightly higher percentage of older learners (age 71-79). While about 45 percent of the age-segregated learners were aged 62-70, 66 percent of the age-integrated learners fell into this younger age group. Other researchers have shown that educational participation declines with advanced age, yet the convenience and proximity of the community learning centers may have been attractive enough to draw the "older" learners into these programs.

Educational level. As a whole, these older learners had an average of 13.3 years of formal schooling. Only two people indicated that they had no formal education, while 76 percent had 12 years or more. The age-segregated learners were, for the most part, high-school graduates. As might be expected, the age-integrated learners had a higher educational level: 51 percent had post-graduate schooling. These highly-educated older learners may be attracted not only by the age-integrated environment, but also by the more "scholarly" atmosphere of the campus.

Organizational Affiliations. The participants were asked if they attended the functions of any clubs, church groups, community organizations, fraternal organizations, or union organizations on a regular basis. Eighty percent of the respondents indicated that they participated in an average of 2.75 organizations. The age-segregated learners in the urban learning center participated in more organizations than the more rural learners, a result which may be a factor of the number of appropriate opportunities for participation. However, no significant differences were found in the organizational affiliation pattern between the age-segregated learners as a whole and the age-integrated learners.

Educational Participation. A person's previous adult education participation is a good "predictor" of current and future participation patterns. In this study, the participants were asked to list the courses or classes they had taken during the past two years. This figure was added to the number of classes they had taken at the learning center or on the campus. Since the age-segregated learners were often enrolled in more than one class at a time, the "number of classes" variable is influenced by the different structure of each of the four programs (the three learning centers and the university). However, the figure can still provide some useful information.

As a whole, the older adult learners had taken an average of 3.9 classes during the past two years. For 68 percent of the age-segregated learners, the learning center was their only adult education experience in the last two years. The same holds true for the Guest Students: 68 percent had taken classes only at the University. Among the age-segregated learners, those in the urban learning center tended to have a higher participation level than those in the rural centers. For example, 28 percent of the urban learners had taken between six and ten classes, while most rural learners had taken between one and three classes. As a whole, however, the age-segregated learners had a lower participation rate than the age-integrated learners (one or two classes vs. three classes). It is possible that the age-integrated learners have a more stable participation pattern. In other words, they may consistently take one or two courses a year over a period of many years as opposed to say four courses at a time one year. It is also possible that the differences in participation are due more to the differences in urban/rural opportunities than they are to the differences between learners who are oriented toward age-segregated or age-integrated learning.

Factor Analysis. The participants' responses to Boshier's 35-item Education Participation Scale were factor analyzed, using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences program. With a few exceptions, the responses formed the same four factors that Boshier labelled Escape/Stimulation, Social Welfare, Social Contact, and Cognitive Interest. Some of the items on the Escape/Stimulation factor did not load at Boshier's established level of 40, but were only at a slightly lower level. The items relating to external suggestions loaded on the Cognitive Interest factor in this study, but some were passenger items with values of -.39 and -.36. The item related to enrolling to earn a degree, diploma or certificate was not related to any of these four factors, and was dropped from the factor analysis.

Factor I, Escape/Stimulation, accounted for 24.6 percent of the total variance, and the four factors together accounted for 44.2 percent. This compares to 48.9 percent on Boshier's factors.

In order to compare the factor scores of the age-segregated and the age-integrated learners, an analysis of variance was performed on the mean factor scores. This allows for a comparison of the strength of each factor within each group of learners, and a comparison of the mean scores of the four groups of learners on each of the four factors. Figure 4 shows these comparisons of means. Note that the computer program has standardized the factor scores to produce a mean of zero and a variance of one.

In spite of the known socializing influence of age-segregated activities, it was hypothesized that the strongest mean factor score for both age-segregated and age-integrated learners would be on Factor IV, Cognitive Interest. This did not turn out to be the case. The strongest factor for the age-segregated learners was Factor III, Social Contact. The age-integrated learners had a strong inverse score

on Social Contact. For them, the strongest factor was Cognitive Interest. These relationships stay the same regardless of the type of class, although the means differ slightly.

When the group means on each factor are compared, the one-way analysis of variance results show that the group differences on Factors I and II are not significant at the .05 level. While Factor IV does show some differences, the differences are the greatest on Factor III, Social Contact. These results seem to indicate that the EPS scale items associated with Factors I, II, and IV had a somewhat similar influence on all the respondents' participation, but the social contact items created the most "controversy". While Escape/Stimulation, Social Welfare, and Cognitive Interest all might play some moderate role in their reasons for participation, they were more definite about either <u>not</u> participating for Social Contact reasons, or choosing to participate for the same reasons.

It is now possible to relate the mean factor scores back to Boshier's model of motivational orientation. Boshier has labelled his four factors according to whether they reflect growth tendencies (Life-space motives) or deficiency tendencies (Life-chance motives). Life-space oriented people participate in adult education for expression -- to expand their life space. Life-chance oriented people participate in adult education in an attempt to cope with life and to meet their lower-order needs. There is, of course, some overlap between these concepts: a reason for participation could be growth to one person and deficiency to another.

In relating participation motivations to psychological states, Boshier has labelled the Escape/Stimulation factor as reflecting Life-chance. Social Welfare and Cognitive Interest are considered to be reflective of Life-space. Boshier has concluded that the Social Contact factor is independent of psychological states. It reflects both Life-chance and Life-space motivation, but its foundation is too

elusive to label it as one or the other. Social Contact is a factor whose meaning is clear, but whose psychological foundation is not.

The results of the factor analysis show that the age-integrated learners had the strongest mean scores on the factor of Cognitive Interest, reflecting their Life-space motivation toward growth. The age-segregated learners were even more strongly oriented toward Social Contact, a factor whose psychological foundation includes both Life-chance and Life-space motives.

Implications for Programming

There is no question but that older adults who participate in continuing education programs enroll to learn something. However, their interest in the topic is often combined with their interest in other things such as meeting new people or overcoming boredom. One technique that adult educators can use in their efforts to make their programs more attractive to older adults is to identify the participation orientations of the learners. If program planners can determine not only what types of older adults are attending their programs but also why they are attending (their motivational orientations), they can then adapt the program content or format as necessary, and develop different marketing strategies for specific audiences. The Education Participation Scale is easy to administer and score, and can provide much useful information.

The results of this study indicate that age-segregated, community-based educational programs are attracting older learners who not only have different social and demographic characteristics, but also have different motivational orientations. They attend community classes for reasons of cost and convenience, and also because of the less formal atmosphere of the classes. Their interest in social contact is a prime motivator for their participation. Program planners who combine the course content with opportunities for socialization in community-based classes may discover

that their enrollments increase and their retention or return rates also increase. They can also make more effective use of their promotional dollar by using the socialization opportunities as a means to attract older learners to community programs. The same approach would probably not be as effective for a college-based program.

One note about the age-segregated learners: their preference for educational format is to take classes in their own communities among learners of all ages. Some older learners do prefer age-segregated classes, but more seem to accept the age-segregated format as the price one has to pay for community-based or targeted programs. Thus there would seem to be a need for community-based programs which are sensitive to the learning needs and interests of older adults, but which are open to learners of all ages. Both community agencies and organizations and educational institutions have an important role to play in providing this type of program.

In conclusion, it is important to remember that the predominant motivation for older adults enrolling in educational programs is to learn. Social contacts can be made equally well if not better in other types of programs. However, the program planner who is sensitive to the different motivational orientations of older adult learners and the different learning environments which attract them will likely have larger numbers of participants, who have been recruited at a lower cost.

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FIGURE I

BARRIERS TO OLDER ADULT PARTICIPATION IN CONTINUING EDUCATION

Graney and Hays, 1976	Informational barriers: cost, too old to learn, not interested in cours Social barriers: don't know enough abo it, feel out of place, friends or children would think it silly. Physical barriers: don't see very well don't hear well, transportation, too busy.
Goodrow, 1975	For Men: attendance requirements job responsibilities schedule conflicts low grades in past dislike of studying amount of time required tired of schools "too old" to begin learning For Women: lack of appropriate courses poor vision home responsibilities dislike of night courses transportation problems "red tape" involved dislike of tests independent reading is enou
Hiemstra, 1975	physiological problems lack of interest lack of educational attainment transportation problems not wanting to go out at night lack of awareness of available programs prohibitive cost lack of time home and job responsibilities uncertainty about learning interests too old time required requirements lack of interest
Thorson, 1978	cost inconvenience transportation problems attitudes toward self and toward educational institutions anxiety over negative attitudes of faculty and other students

FIGURE 2

FACTOR ANALYSIS OF THE EDUCATION PARTICIPATION SCALE

FACTOR I: ESCAPE/STIMULATION
EPS ITEMS:
4. To get relief from boredom.
7. To overcome the frustration of day-to-day living.
24. To get a break in the routine of home or work.
13. To keep up with competition.
20. To have a few hours away from responsibilities.
26. To keep up with others.
5. To carry out the recommendation of some authority.
10. To stop myself from becoming a vegetable.
15. To gain insight into my personal problems.
8. To be accepted by others.
35. To comply with instructions from someone else.
31. To comply with the suggestions of someone else.
17. To escape television.
29. To escape an unhappy relationship.
9. To supplement a narrow previous education.
30. To provide a contrast to my previous education.
28. To maintain or improve my social position.
23. To provide a contrast to the rest of my life.

FACTOR II: SOCIAL WELFARE
EPS ITEMS:
2. To share a common interest with my spouse or friend.
19. To gain insight into human relations.
11. To acquire knowledge to help with other educational courses.
3. To become more effective as a citizen.
34. To improve my ability to participate in community work.
18. To prepare for community service.
25. To improve my ability to serve mankind.

FACTOR III: SOCIAL CONTACT
EPS ITEMS:
27. To improve my social relationships.
12. To fulfill a need for personal associations and friendships.
33. To make new friends.
14. To participate in group activity.
22. To become acquainted with congenial people.

FACTOR IV: COGNITIVE INTEREST
EPS ITEMS:
16. To help me earn a degree, diploma or certificate.
32. To learn just for the sake of learning.
1. To seek knowledge for its own sake.
21. To learn just for the joy of learning.
6. To satisfy an inquiring mind.

SOURCE: BOSHIER AND RIDDELL, 1978: 169

FIGURE 3

TESTS FOR DIFFERENCES AMONG RESPONDENTS

Research Question: Do the chi-square values show significant statistical differences at the .05 level among the groups of older adult learners?

Characteristic	Among the 3 groups of age-segregated learners	Between the age-segregated learners as a whole and the age-integrated learners
Area of residence	yes*	yes
Type of dwelling	yes*	yes
Who one lives with	yes	yes
Marital status	yes	yes
Number of children	no	yes
Occupation	no	yes
Educational level	no	yes
Income	no	yes
Number of clubs	yes	no
Number of classes	yes*	yes*
Age	no	yes
Sex	no	yes
Religion	no	yes
Race	no	no

*the difference is determined in part by the structure of the educational program

FIGURE 4

MEAN FACTOR SCORES OF FOUR GROUPS OF LEARNERS

Standardized mean = 0 Variance = 1.0	FACTOR I Escape/Stimulation	FACTOR II Social Welfare	FACTOR III Social Contact	FACTOR IV Cognitive Interest
Age-Segregated Learners in Academic Classes	-.153	-.058	.506	-.069
Age-Segregated Learners in Hobby/Recreation Classes	.232	-.029	.617	-.352
Age-Integrated Learners in Academic Classes	-.114	.051	-.537	.234
Age-Integrated Learners in Hobby/Recreation Classes	.051	.048	-.917	.305
F - Ratio	F = 1.94	F = .17	F = 46.64	F = 5.33
Q: Are there significant differences in the group means at the .05 level?	NO	NO	YES	YES